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It's time Reagan exposed the appeasers on Capitol Hill

Congress is taking its annual Easter break back home on Main Street this week and President Reagan should use the opportunity to inform the people of the serious damage that has been done to the United States' vital national interests in Central America.

The Senate's lopsided vote last week opposing the mining of Nicaragua's waters by CIA-supported Nicaraguan democratic forces — followed by a similar House vote — was a classic example of disinformation by a small politically motivated small group of politically motivated Congressional aides.

For more than four years the Nicaragua junta has been providing arms, sanctuary and direction to the leftist guerillas trying to shoot their way into power in El Salvador.

SOVIET ARMS

Throughout this undisguised offensive, Congress has repeatedly approved support for the Nicaraguan democratic forces.

This U.S. military aid is aimed at stopping Soviet arms supplies to the El Salvador guerillas. It is also aimed at persuading the junta to call off its bid to spread Soviet and Cuban style revolution throughout Central America.

It is thoroughly justified under the charters of the UN and OAS which specifically provide for the right of self-defense against armed aggression.

The Senate on April 6 approved continuing this military aid — including, what had been known for months, support for the rebels' mining operations. Indeed, the rebels had specifically announced each operation since the mining began last January.

Before that Senate vote, but too late to influence it, the *Wall Street Journal* published deliberately leaked details of the mining operation which had been provided to the House Intelligence Committee by CIA Director William Casey in January and March.

This was classified information. The leak raised a firestorm in the Washington press corps and among many members of Congress which enabled Sen. Kennedy and other Democratic opponents of the Reagan Administration's Central American policy to regroup and create a stampede.

ANOTHER LEAK

Sen. Goldwater, head of the Senate Intelligence Committee, sent an angry confidential letter to Casey. He protested that he had not been briefed on the mining operation but his House counterpart had been and he complained that if this happened again he would raise "one hell of a lot of fuss about it in public."

Goldwater's letter was promptly leaked. Who by? Certainly, not by Goldwater. He is an elder statesman of substance and status and when the Senate Republicans panicked and joined the Democrats to vote against the mining he opposed the scuttle.

It is irrelevant whether Goldwater was present or not when his intelligence committee was briefed by the CIA. Casey personally briefed the committee on March 8 and again on March 13. The committee's staff was given a further, much more detailed briefing on April 2 when Sen. Moynihan's senior committee aide says was put into a memorandum that was haphazardly circulated.

SECRET BRIEFING

Each briefing contained specific reference to the mining. Sen. Leahy (D-Vt.), opposed to the operation, says he was fully informed about it.

Sen. Moynihan, more equivocal, concedes that his aide "seems to remember it" but adds: "I'm sitting here wondering what is really going on."

What is going on is a blatant violation of classified information and possibly a violation of U.S. law.

It is crucial to Congress' oversight role vis a vis the CIA that the intelligence committees have an effective working relationship with the CIA and that it is confidential. Until now that relationship has been very good, certainly between committee members and top CIA officials.

The crisis in Central America, however, has begun to create problems among committee staff members concerned with their own personal causes.

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